

NEHRU'S DISILLUSIONMENT OVER TIBET

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In the years since India became a sovereign State and the Communists gained control over China, India's relations with her giant neighbor to the north have varied from friendly emotion to cool reserve.

In the early days there was a feeling of comradeship for a nation which stood in the front rank of those who were combating colonialism and Western domination. For the Government of India the motive was a more important one than just emotion and was dictated by the conviction that India's economic program demanded peace and that good relations with China were a prime requisite.

The climax of this policy came in 1954 with the visit of Premier Chou En-lai to New Delhi. This visit produced the joint declaration of the "Five Principles" (Panch Shila) of peaceful coexistence. These were: respect for territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in another country's internal affairs, equality and peaceful coexistence. These were the principles that also formed the basis of agreed relations among Asian and African nations at the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia.

Later in 1954, Nehru made a visit to China and when he returned it was evident that he felt a little worried over the material progress there. He was noticeably impressed by the fact that in the matter of manpower alone China, with a population of 600 million, was infinitely stronger than India with 400 million.

It is, therefore, understandable that when the fighting broke out recently in Tibet informed Indian opinion became galvanized and tense over the maneuvers of a powerful, centralized and militant China. The situation is replete with anxiety for India which ardently desires to live at peace with all. There is little doubt that India would early like to aid Tibet, but the tone of the propaganda emanating from China has been decidedly menacing.

Instead of having a quiet, peaceful Tibet as a northern neighbor, India is now bordered directly by a ruthless, dynamic and boisterous China bent on achieving Communism

as rapidly as possible. This is not only politically disquieting, but also presents a military problem to India which is of considerable magnitude. While the Himalayas present quite a formidable barrier to the movement of troops, they are ineffective against modern jet aircraft, and the great cities of Delhi, Lucknow, Benares and Allahabad are all within 400 miles of the new frontier--just less than one hour in a jet bomber.

There is also the possibility that an aroused China would try to penetrate into the Buddhist district of Ladakh, in Kashmir, and also threaten interference in the affairs of Nepal whose king is being ardently wooed by Peking at the present time. The Chinese could invent any number of pretexts for military adventure since the frontier has never been clearly defined in this wild, mountainous region between China and India.

The anti-Chinese and anti-Communist feeling in Tibet has existed for some years. In April, Lt. Gen. Chang Kuo-ha, the Chinese military commander in Tibet, told a meeting of the Communist-sponsored Preparatory Committee for the Tibetan Autonomous Region that the Tibetan Government's opposition to Communist policies began soon after the Sino-Tibetan Agreement of 1951 was signed. This agreement, which the Tibetans had entered with goodwill, was evidently never intended by the Chinese to be anything but an easy means of access to the territory they coveted.

The now exiled Dalai Lama said in a statement he made at Tezpur on April 18 that the 17-point agreement had been signed under pressure and that Chinese suzerainty had been accepted because "there was no alternative left to the Tibetans." But the agreement stated that Tibet would enjoy full autonomy and, although the control of external affairs was to be in the hands of the Chinese Government, it was agreed that there would be no interference by the Chinese with Tibet's religion, customs and internal administration.

However, this was a mere sop to the Tibetans. As the Dalai Lama pointed out, "after the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese armies, the Tibetan Government did not enjoy any measure of autonomy, even in internal matters and the Chinese Government exercised full powers in Tibetan affairs."

An open letter of July 1956 by Thubten Nyenjik, Governor of the Tibetan Province of Gyantse, was more explicit. He stated:

"To us Tibetans, the phrase 'the liberation of Tibet,' in its moral and spiritual implications, is viewed as a deadly mockery. The country of a free people was invaded and occupied under the pretext of liberation. Liberation from whom and what? Ours was a happy country with a solvent government and a contented people until the Chinese invasion in 1950 since when we have been so exploited that we have been reduced to a state of intellectual, spiritual and economic bankruptcy.

"Viewed in its historical perspective, the so-called 'liberation' of Tibet is the latest and most formidable attempt of the Chinese prompted by the greed of an over-populated country for the vast area which comprises Tibet and her wealth in natural resources--as witness the exploitation of our oil resources in Tsaidam, to colonize Tibet in a struggle that has persevered through the centuries. For let there be no mistake about it, the 'liberation' of Tibet is nothing but a newer form of brutal, ruthless colonialism to be more dreaded than the old because here, the aim is not only exploitation, but the complete absorption of a people--absorption or extermination are the only two alternatives offered to the people of Tibet by the Chinese."

On April 27, 1959, Premier Nehru made a statement to the Indian Parliament. It was necessarily a carefully measured statement in which he tried to inject the utmost in reasonableness and calm, couched in the most moderate language. Nevertheless, through these measured and careful phrases it is possible to discern his disappointment and even resentment, bordering on anger, at the treatment accorded him and his government's role by the Communist government of China with regard to the tragic events in Tibet.

Nehru stressed the "irresponsible" charges by the Chinese that the Dalai Lama's statement made on entering India had been forced upon him. Nehru also rejected Peking's

wild charges that India had "abducted" the Tibetan leader and brought him by force to India. "I need not tell the House," Nehru said, "that the Dalai Lama entered Indian territory entirely of his own volition. At no time had we suggested that he should come to India."

Nehru did not try to hide his bitterness at Peking's accusations when he went on to say that a tragedy has been and is being enacted in Tibet. Passions have been let loose, charges made and "language used which cannot but worsen the situation and our relations with our northern neighbor." He pointed out that the situation may well have far-reaching consequences. What these consequences might be he did not say, but behind Nehru's calm phrases there was speaking a man who had firmly and even devoutly believed in the sanctity of the fundamentals of the Bandung Conference and of the "Five Principles." On these elements he had built his entire foreign policy as regards his relations with China. All this lies in ruins at his feet and he is now constrained to find another avenue of dignified approach towards China. India today is in search of a new policy which will undoubtedly be extremely difficult to devise. It must be a policy which will somehow endeavor to bridge the gap the Chinese have wilfully dug between themselves and those Asians for whom Bandung had a real meaning and for whom the "Five Principles" were a veritable foundation of conduct in the world of international politics.

India, Nehru said, cannot allow itself to be swept away in the excitement of the moment onto a wrong course. He said it was not up to him to make a similar appeal to the leaders of Red China, but he did mention that he had been "greatly distressed" at the tone of the comments and charges made against India by responsible people in China. He pointed out that "They have used the language of the cold war regardless of truth and propriety." He said he found this particularly distressing in a nation with thousands of years of culture behind it and which has been noted for its restrained and polite behavior.

Nehru coldly denied the Chinese allegation that the Indian Government was holding the Dalai Lama by force and then said that the Chinese authorities "should surely know how we function in this country and what our laws and constitution are." He added, that of course, the Dalai Lama was free to leave India at any time he wished and for any destination he might choose. In view of his previous

defense of Red China and his advocacy that it be admitted to the United Nations, it must have been difficult for Nehru to make such statements publicly.

On May 3, the Communist Chinese held a mass rally of 30,000 people in Peking at which the speakers accused the Indians of interfering in internal Chinese affairs by supporting the Tibetan rebels. One speaker, Liu Ning-i, Chairman of the All-China Trade Unions Federation, inexplicably and clearly only for propaganda effect, warned "British imperialists and Indian expansionists" that Communist China would "never tolerate aggression against our territory or interference in our internal affairs." To accuse the disciples of the pacific Mahatma Gandhi of being "expansionists" is sheer hypocrisy. The Communists, however, usually employ the tactic of accusing others of doing the very thing they themselves are doing.

As Nehru pointed out, it is true that British policy was one of expansion into Tibet in the early years of this century. As a result, the British did establish certain extraterritorial rights in Tibet and when India became independent it inherited these rights. But, Nehru insisted, when India became free she did not want to retain these rights. Soon after the Chinese armies entered Tibet in 1950, the question of these rights was raised and India readily gave them up. Army detachments were withdrawn and Indian postal and telegraph installations and rest houses were handed over. Since then, as is widely known, the Indian Government has gone out of its way to cultivate the friendship of China. For this reason, Nehru said, "it is a matter of the deepest regret and surprise to us that charges should be made which are both unbecoming and entirely void of substance." Despite China's unwarranted attack, the Indian Government remains firmly attached to its policy of friendship towards China and has plainly stated that it will do nothing which would disturb relations between the two countries.

Nehru pointed to the duplicity of China's policy by mentioning his conversation two years ago with Chinese Premier Chou En-lai concerning Tibet. Chou, he said, told him that while Tibet had long been a part of the Chinese state, they did not consider it as a province of China. Therefore, they considered Tibet an autonomous region which

would enjoy autonomy. Chou further told Nehru that it was absurd for anyone to imagine that China was going to force Communism on Tibet. It would be difficult to imagine a more glaring contradiction between this statement and China's current onslaught on Tibetan freedom.

Indian public opinion has undergone a great change in recent days and the country's disappointment and resentment has been aptly expressed in an editorial in the Hindustan Times of New Delhi:

"Let us hold our heads low today," the newspaper said. "A small country on our border has paid the ultimate penalty for its temerity to aspire to independence. Tibet is dead. We do not need reminders from Peking of the grim determination of the heroic 600 million Chinese to overcome what remains of the will to resistance of the three million Tibetans. The world has much experience of the Communist capacity to finish a job of that kind with thoroughness."

It is apparent that what irks the Indians most is the glaring bad faith with which the Chinese have acted. As a result there have been a number of demands throughout India that Nehru take a bold, forthright position with regard to the situation. However, his personal feelings cannot enter into the picture since he is bound by the requirements of his official position as premier and foreign minister of a great, but vulnerable, country. By his statements he had made it clear that he does not like what China has done. Officially, it would be difficult for him to go beyond this since to do so might very well jeopardize India's strategic and political positions.

India has recognized the strategic peril and has strengthened its military establishment in Assam. As far as the political aspects of the rape of Tibet are concerned, a great many Indians feel that it has definitively wrecked Nehru's long-standing pleas for "understanding" and "coexistence" with China. And beyond India and the prestige it enjoys, there are the other teeming millions of non-Communist Asia and Africa for whom the Principles of Bandung were not the empty words they apparently signified for the Communists. Reports from many of these countries give every evidence that deception and disillusionment there have been just as deep as in India.